



AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB, Texas



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Murder plot nets AF lawyer 18 years

An Air Force lawyer convicted this week of plotting to kill his wife was given 18 years in the stockade Wednesday and kicked out of the service.

Capt. Barry W. Brown faced the military judge, Col. William Burd, as the sentence was handed down in a Lackland AFB courtroom, base spokesman Oscar Balladares said.

Brown pleaded guilty Tuesday as part of a plea bargain. He could have been given life without parole.

Brown worked in the 37th Training Wing judge advocate's office at the base when he was charged with conspiring with Sgt. Ramona R. Greiner to kill his wife, Irene.

The Air Force said Brown and Greiner, who worked in his office as a paralegal, had an affair. They allegedly schemed to pay a civilian \$25,000 to kill Irene Brown, but the man reported the incident and she was not hurt.

Greiner goes on trial next week.

San Antonio Express News

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Susan Yerkes: S.A. adding music to shelter life

Web Posted: 09/14/2005 12:00 AM CDT

San Antonio Express-News

Sung or silent, "Amazing Grace" has permeated S.A. since the city opened its arms and heart to Louisiana evacuees.

Former Mayor Lila Cockrell, head of the S.A. Parks Foundation, has worked for weeks to make sure that evacuees — "our new friends and residents," as she puts it — can share in this weekend's Jazz'SAlive, one of the foundation's biggest annual events. The free jazzfest in Travis Park starts Saturday at noon with Percy Lewis, and continues through Sunday night with a host of jazz greats.

Even before the downtown music begins, out at KellyUSA, S.A.'s colorful Carnaval de San Anto will lead folks from the main shelter to adjacent Lambert Park, where the Air Force Band of the West's Dimensions in Blue will jazz up the crowd. (Carnaval de San Anto will also be dancing and drumming in Travis Park later on Saturday and Sunday. Whew!)

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Roddy Stinson: Air Force study of ALS 'Kelly cluster' enlightening, inconclusive

Web Posted: 09/13/2005 12:00 AM CDT

San Antonio Express-News

The so-called "Kelly cluster" of victims of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease) is a little more in focus today, thanks to the findings of an Air Force investigation.

The findings — contained in a 144-page report, "Case Series Investigation of ALS Among Former Kelly Air Force Base Workers" — were released to the Express-News last week.

In sum, the researchers concluded:

"... The lack of salient predictors for ALS, combined with the varied Kelly ties among the participants and the observational nature of our study (i.e., no comparison group), makes it difficult to hypothesize what kinds of detrimental exposures, if any, might have been common to the cases."

In the process of coming to that non-conclusion, the Air Force scientists uncovered considerable intriguing information.

That will surprise no one who has followed this fascinating story since the cluster was first mentioned in a Dec. 20, 1998, Express-News article about a San Antonio woman's battle with ALS.

In that piece, a University Hospital neurologist noted that about 10 ALS patients in the hospital's Reeves Rehabilitation Center were former Kelly AFB workers.

From that hint of a health problem just begging to be investigated grew an October 2000 Express-News report, "Connection or Coincidence: High numbers of ALS disease seen in Kelly workers."

Subsequently, the Air Force Institute for Operational Health launched an extensive years-long effort to (1) identify ALS victims with links to Kelly and (2) analyze data collected from those victims and their families.

Ultimately, 95 questionnaires were completed by ALS victims or their loved ones, and 93 were included in the institute's analysis.

The questionnaire elicited information about sex, age, ethnicity, medical history, recreational activities, tobacco/alcohol use, military service and work history, including exposure to chemicals and metals.

Space limitation prevents me from discussing all of the statistics in those areas, but several findings stand out:

The overwhelming majority of participants (83 percent) "identified themselves as White/Caucasian, and only 13 percent self-identified as Hispanic/Latino. This finding is different from the prevailing demographic pattern in Bexar County."

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"Over 90 percent of the 93 participants were male, which constituted a major difference between our cases and those described in (other ALS-research) literature. ... At 10.6 males per female, the gender ratio was roughly 5 to 6 times greater than what is normally reported."

"Another noteworthy and rather unexpected finding was that 6.5 percent had been professional or semi-professional athletes. ...

"This reported athleticism, coupled with a low prevalence of obesity-related diseases, suggests that our cases were generally more active than U.S. males of similar ages."

"Among workers who reported working at Kelly in the 20 years prior to diagnosis, the most frequently contacted substance was jet fuel fumes (30 percent), followed by cleaning solvents/degreasers (28 percent) and aluminum (25 percent)."

"A large percentage (80 percent) reported having a military service history. ...

"Interestingly, a recent report found that U.S. males with any military service history prior to the Gulf War are 60 percent more likely to develop ALS than U.S. males without a military service history.

"The apparent preponderance of veterans in our (Kelly AFB) series might somehow be associated with this phenomenon; however, there is no way to tell from our study.

"In any case, more years of data will be required to determine if there is increased incidence of ALS among U.S. vets, and if so, what might have triggered these increases."



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September 19, 2005

Randolph keeps tabs on troops during storm Readiness center becomes tracking device for affected airmen

By [Rod Hafemeister](#)
Times staff writer

SAN ANTONIO — In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Air Force officials faced a question: “Where are our airmen?”

Air Force leaders needed to determine what happened to airmen who were told to evacuate, who were off base when the storm hit, or who were already en route to an affected base when stop-movement orders were issued.

But the Air Force has an advantage civilians do not — the Personnel Readiness Center at Randolph Air Force Base, which provides critical personnel accountability support to commanders during a crisis.

The PRC is an outgrowth of the mission of accounting for airmen who are deployed, said Lt. Col. John Kresek, chief of the Readiness Division at the Air Force Personnel Center, which includes the PRC.

The division has access to personnel databases and systems experts, as well as overseeing the training of PERSCO (Personnel Support for Contingency Operations) teams that provide deployed personnel accountability and reporting support.

As such, the PRC is “uniquely qualified” to also provide emergency support to home station commanders.

“We are the focal point for commanders on accountability for both civilian and military in the event of evacuation or, as we have at this point, we have a lot of downed power lines and communications problems,” Kresek said. “Our 1-800 number has proven very valuable to wing commanders.”

Using a pick-and-choose customer service system, the PRC can create separate instructions for airmen from different bases, updated daily or even hourly based on guidance from individual wing commanders.

“We put out there whatever the information is they want their people to know,” Kresek said. “We don’t have to have that bank of 50 people to answer their calls.”

And airmen can use the number to check in.

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“This is the neatest part of our job,” Kresek said. “There were 269 active-duty people who couldn’t get through to Keesler [Air Force Base, Miss.] and they called the PRC. There also were 18 reservists and 75 civilians. “If a base can’t reach them or they can’t reach the base, we’re the ‘reach-back’ capability.”

That’s especially useful in the cases of people who find themselves holed up somewhere other than their emergency “safe-haven” plans had listed.

In a few cases, PRC personnel called parents or other emergency contacts asking about airmen who were unaccounted for.

By Sept. 6, the PRC was able to account for all the airmen from the affected region except for two from Keesler. They still were working to track down about 56 civilians, who aren’t required to maintain the same level of emergency contact information on file.

As Katrina approached, the PRC alerted specialists in the Personnel Center to be prepared to augment the PRC for 24/7 operations — and coordinated with commanders at Keesler, Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla., and other bases in the path of the storm.

On Aug. 30, they stood up round-the-clock operations.

By Sept. 6, they had fielded 2,810 phone calls that involved conversations, not just the touch-tone info service, with a peak of 873 calls on Sept. 1.

“We don’t drive the train. Depending on what we’re asked to do, we can lead, we can follow,” Kresek said. “We can really do whatever the major commands and combatant commander need us to do as far as tracking the faces and the spaces for the manpower and personnel needs.”

Elsewhere in San Antonio, airmen found themselves doing the kinds of disaster relief efforts normally done overseas. As Labor Day weekend approached, word went out that about 10,000 evacuees would be coming to Kelly USA, the former Kelly Air Force Base, aboard 89 aircraft.

Airmen and Air Force civilians swung into action, including just-graduated basic trainees who found themselves on hold at Lackland Air Force Base because they couldn’t be sent to tech schools at Keesler.

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Officials said about 260 such airmen were on hold, with approximately 330 more projected to remain at Lackland over the next few weeks.

“We did an incredible job — sometimes off-loading and processing hundreds of evacuees from eight to 10 aircraft at the same time,” said Col. Mary Kay Hertog, 37th Training Wing commander. “The support we provided was unprecedented and I couldn’t be prouder of all the support being provided by the Lackland community.

“The true test now is in our sustainment of this support to our neighbors from New Orleans. I encourage people — military and civilian — to continue to volunteer and give of their time.”

Other area support included:

- Wilford Hall Medical Center here had seven Critical Care Air Transport teams rotating in and out of New Orleans to help transport critical patients.
- A 60-member Contingency Aeromedical Staging Facility team deployed from Wilford Hall on Sept. 2 to provide medical care and support for patients being evacuated from the area.
- The 433rd Airlift Wing, which operates the C-5 Galaxy, had flown more than 20 aeromedical evacuation missions to the region, transporting more than 1,200 patients back to the San Antonio area for treatment by Sept. 5.

A link to hurricane information is available at www.afpc.randolph.af.mil. The toll-free number to the PRC is (800) 435-9941.

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Weida cleared

Academy commandant didn't push religion, investigators say; critics call it a 'whitewash'

By [Laura M. Colarusso](#)

Times staff writer

Air Force investigators say Brig. Gen. Johnny Weida, the Air Force Academy commandant, did not improperly push his religion on subordinates — and critics say the decision proves the service isn't serious about stopping religious insensitivity.

Now, Weida's promotion to major general, which the Senate held pending the outcome of the investigation, will move forward.

Allegations that Weida, a born-again Christian, used a hand signal to encourage cadets to proselytize to fellow students were "not substantiated," according to a statement from the Air Force. Weida's actions of making a "J" with his thumb and forefinger to invoke the name of Jesus Christ did not violate the Constitution's prohibition against establishing an official religion, the statement also said.

The embattled general has been the subject of numerous investigations and much scrutiny since accusation of religious intolerance arose at the academy earlier this year. His endorsement of the National Day of Prayer and public proclamations about being accountable to God also have fueled criticism that he and other school officials used their rank to advocate Christianity.

Weida earlier this year had been cleared by the Air Force inspector general of six other allegations of wrongdoing. A task force led by Lt. Gen. Roger Brady, deputy chief of staff for personnel issues, found that inappropriate expressions of faith made by school leaders created an atmosphere of religious intolerance but found no "overt" bias at the school.

With the investigations over, acting Air Force Secretary Peter Geren said he has "great confidence" in Weida and "fully supports" his promotion to major general, the Air Force statement said. Weida's nomination was announced May 9, but the Senate deferred his confirmation in July pending the outcome of the Air Force investigation.

Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League and one of the academy's most vocal critics on the issue of religious intolerance, said the decision "saddened" him.

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"I think it sends the wrong message," Foxman said. "This is a military institution where we set standards for our leaders of the future."

Rob Boston, a spokesman for Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, made similar comments.

"I think it's an unfortunate sign that the Air Force continues to not take this matter seriously," Boston said. "It looks like a whitewash."

Both Foxman and Boston denounced the Air Force's decision to move forward with Weida's promotion, saying service leaders fired the four in charge of the academy when the sexual assault scandal hit in early 2003.

"I don't think he should be punished, but he certainly shouldn't be rewarded," Foxman said. "Why reward him? Why promote him? A message can be read that the issue of intolerance is not that significant" to the Air Force.

"The [Air Force] acknowledges that Weida did something wrong, yet not only is he not being punished, he's about to be rewarded with a promotion in rank. What sort of message does that send?" Boston said. "After the sex abuse scandal, they cleaned house. Heads rolled in that case. To date, nobody has lost a job or even been demoted for this."

Capt. McLinda Morton, a Protestant chaplain at the academy who became known for bringing the problems at the academy to light, resigned last June from the Air Force in protest over the service's handling of the religious respect issue. After Morton spoke out about her concerns, she was reassigned away from the academy, a matter which is under investigation by the Air Force inspector general at the request of former acting Air Force Secretary Michael Dominguez.

Weida, a 1978 academy graduate, declined an interview request and did not release a statement about the inspector general's findings. He has become a focal point in the controversy over religion at the school, where a Jewish cadet was told the Holocaust was punishment for the death of Jesus.

Lt. Gen. John Rosa, academy superintendent and Weida's boss, has publicly criticized Weida for some of his comments. However, Rosa said in a Sept. 8 written statement that he is pleased with the final results of the investigation.

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“Weida is an outstanding officer who has successfully helped lead our [academy] through some very tough times these past two years,” Rosa said, referring to the changes that have been made at the academy in the wake of the sexual assault scandal. “Based on his superlative 27-year record of performance, we are confident he will fill roles of ever-increasing responsibility in our Air Force for many years to come.”

The Air Force statement also praised Weida, saying he “has readily acknowledged that his actions were inappropriate and has taken positive, visible corrective actions that reflect his true character.

“Since the incident in question, [Brig. Gen.] Weida has also been a key leader in terms of strengthening and improving religious accommodation policies for cadets of all religions, along with those who claim no religion,” said the statement. “In addition, he has worked to help develop new religious respect initiatives for cadets, faculty and staff.”

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Military, civilians join forces for Gulf Coast

By [Karen Jowers](#)

Times staff writers

Support flowing through the military community is mounting as civilians and service members try to help those who were affected by Hurricane Katrina.

Mari Welch, the Coast Guard's ombudsman-at-large, is helping coordinate volunteer efforts, matching up resources and donations coming from both military and civilian donors with Coast Guard families.

She arrived in St. Louis on Sept. 5, and is setting up a database of those who have offered help from all over the country.

"One gentleman called from his cell phone in his truck, offering to put people up," she said. "He told me, 'I'll even go fetch them' if they need transportation," she said.

Coast Guard families who need help, or those who want to support Coast Guard families, can call (314) 539-3900, Ext. 3246, 3217 or 3240.

As with the other services, the Coast Guard is paying per diem, travel and other allowances, which has helped, said Welch, wife of Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Frank Welch.

Countless groups are offering help and information to military families displaced by the hurricane. Some of the information defense officials are trying to convey includes:

- Families who were evacuated can get up to two months of advance pay and safe-haven allowances for up to 180 days after arriving at their new location. Those are similar to temporary-duty travel allowances and include the cost of lodging, plus a separate meal and incidental allowance.

More information on how to get these allowances is available by logging on to www.dod.mil/dfas, or by calling the Defense Finance and Accounting Service's 24-hour, toll-free hot line at (800) 756-4571 and selecting option 6.

- Health care managers are making adjustments to continue Tricare coverage.

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Patients who move, even temporarily, can continue their Tricare coverage but are asked to update their contact information in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System, DEERS, by calling (800) 538-9552 toll free, or going online to www.tricare.osd.mil/DEERS/update-info.cfm.

Early refills of prescription medicine are allowed, and people who lost prescriptions in the storm have several options for refills. They may see a doctor for a new prescription and take that to a retail store in the Tricare network. They may use an empty medicine vial or some other proof of prescription and take it to a pharmacy in the Tricare network that will help resolve the issue.

Prescriptions can be filled at any military pharmacy. Call Express Scripts Inc. at (866) 363-8779 or (866) DOD-TRRX for information on filling prescriptions at retail pharmacies.

For more information about Tricare in Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama, call Humana Military Health Services at (800) 444-5445 or go to its Web site at www.humana-military.com.

- The U.S. Postal Service has stopped mail in parts of the storm-damaged region. People who cannot receive their Tricare-covered prescriptions by mail can transfer their mail-order prescriptions to a network pharmacy by calling (866) DOD-TMOP or (866) 363-8667.

Tricare Prime patients from affected areas in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana do not need referrals to seek care. The temporary policy covers people who live in certain ZIP codes. A list is online at www.tricare.osd.mil/Katrina/KatrinaZip.cfm.

- The Department of Veterans Affairs evacuated its medical centers in Gulfport, Miss., and New Orleans. The clinics along the Gulf Coast have reopened. Veterans who want information on how to get their prescription medicines or where to get care can call (800) 507-4571. For more information, see www1.va.gov/opal/katrina.

- The Military Vaccine Agency is urging service members who deploy to help clean up the disaster to ensure their standard adult immunizations are up to date, particularly shots to protect against tetanus-diphtheria (Td) toxoids and hepatitis A.

“However, the risk of vaccine-preventable infection is not great enough to delay participation in relief efforts” if an immunization is not immediately available, the agency said on its Web site at www.vaccines.mil/default.aspx?cnt=katrina/katrinaTeaser.

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• The military relief societies are helping Katrina victims with grants or interest-free loans. Those needing assistance should go to the nearest office of the Air Force Aid Society (www.afas.org), Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, (www.nmcrs.org), Coast Guard Mutual Assistance (www.cgmahq.org) or Army Emergency Relief, (www.aerhq.org); call toll free (866) 878-6378; or go to the nearest American Red Cross chapter (www.redcross.org).

A Coast Guard mutual assistance team in the field is traveling around in a mobile home, helping attend to families' needs, said executive director Tom Omri.

The Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society has offices open in Millington, Tenn.; Fort Worth, Ingleside, Corpus Christi and Houston in Texas; and Gulfport, Meridian and Pascagoula, Miss. They've helped more than 1,600 clients so far, giving out \$636,432, mostly in grants, spokesman John Alexander said.

The Air Force Aid Society has given more than \$203,000 to people at Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., along with another \$50,000 at bases serving as evacuation sites, and 840 \$20 phone cards.

• Army and Air Force Exchange Service officials are waiving interest and suspending payments for an undetermined amount of time in affected areas, said spokesman Judd Anstey. Officials estimate about 15,000 people are affected.

The exchange service also has set up procedures for patrons to donate gift cards that can be used at any AAFES facility. At the store at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., where more than 1,000 active-duty and retired personnel from Keesler, Biloxi and Gulfport have been evacuated, more than \$45,000 in exchange gift cards have been bought, officials said.

The main exchange at Keesler suffered major damage, and the store at Jackson Barracks in New Orleans was destroyed. A tactical field exchange such as those used in Iraq and Afghanistan is operating in Gulfport; an additional one was on its way to the New Orleans area at press time.

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Academy grad may never face rape trial

By [Rod Hafemeister](#)

Times staff writer

An Air Force Academy graduate may never face court-martial on charges he raped a fellow cadet because prosecutors were late in appealing a judge's order to separate the case from a second, lesser charge involving a different woman.

The legal limbo started when defense attorneys claimed during a June trial that 1st Lt. Joseph J. Harding could not get a fair trial on the rape charge. The heart of their argument is that a civilian rape counselor refused to turn over notes from her sessions with the alleged victim, and the government was unwilling or unable to take her into custody for contempt.

Government prosecutors are appealing to the Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces, but Wendy Murphy, an attorney representing both the woman claiming she was raped and the counselor, said she has little hope the appeal will result in a trial.

"Dragging this out until it dies a slow death is the strategy, I think," she said in a voice mail response to questions.

Harding went on trial at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, on June 24, accused of raping Jessica Brakey while both were cadets at the academy in August 2000. He's also accused of indecent assault upon another woman at the academy in September 1999.

On the third day of trial, judge Col. David Brash ordered the rape and indecent assault cases be severed and he abated — put on hold — the rape case.

The details of Brash's order, which followed hours of closed hearings, are sealed. But the order put a trial on the more serious rape charge on hiatus pending some change in the stalemate over the counselor's records.

On June 25, as jury selection was to begin for trial on the assault charge, the Air Force Court of Criminal Appeals granted prosecutors' request for an emergency stay of all proceedings while it considered their appeal of Brash's ruling.

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The government had 20 days to forward documents to the appellate court. Government lawyers didn't make the deadline, nor did they request an extension before the deadline.

On July 29, the Air Force Court of Criminal Appeals denied a government motion to suspend the 20-day rule, and the appellate court later denied the government's motion to reconsider.

Prosecutors recently took their appeal to the next level, the Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces, where it is pending.

Officials have offered no comments other than official statements that, "The Air Force is confident that the military appellate process will produce a fair and timely decision in this case."

The Air Force Office of Special Investigations recommended closing the case against Harding in October 2002, citing insufficient evidence. Harding was a student pilot at Columbus Air Force Base, Miss., when the charges were reopened in an expanding investigation of alleged sexual crimes at the academy.

The case drew national attention, first because Brakey was one of several former cadets to go public with allegations of rapes and other sexual crimes among academy cadets and again when Jessica Bier, a Colorado springs therapist, refused to turn over records of her counseling sessions with Brakey.

Unless one side blinks, it is unlikely Harding would ever stand trial on the rape charge if the abatement is upheld.

Officials have indicated that a trial on the assault charge could be scheduled for mid-October.

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September 19, 2005

Keesler classes put on hold until March

By [Bruce Rolfsen](#)

Times staff writer

Training at Keesler Air Force Base in coastal Mississippi will resume in March at the earliest, according to the general who oversees the technical education center.

“Our mission has changed from training to a bed-down mission,” said Brig Gen. William Lord, commander of Keesler’s 81st Training Wing.

With a fully operational airfield and base infrastructure that for the most part survived Hurricane Katrina, Keesler has become a center of operations for recovery efforts. Federal agencies ranging from the FBI to the Forest Service have set up shop at Keesler.

Lord said that between helping Biloxi, Miss., and other coastal communities and getting Keesler’s teaching facilities repaired, March is the earliest date that some classes can resume there.

It could be much longer for all classes to resume. Among the hardest-hit classrooms, Lord said, were air traffic control instruction facilities where two simulators, valued at \$10 million each, were destroyed by flood waters.

Also closed for the immediate future is Keesler’s 185-bed hospital, the second largest in the Air Force. The upper floors withstood the storm but the utility-filled basement was flooded by Katrina’s storm surge.

While repair work goes on at Keesler, Air Education and Training Command officials are looking at whether the courses will be temporarily moved to other installations and how Keesler will reopen classroom doors.

AETC headquarters spokesman David Smith said the command’s operations division is looking at options for restarting the courses, but as of Sept. 8, the command wasn’t ready to announce firm plans.

Keesler and Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas, are the Air Force’s primary school houses for technical education.

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Keesler is home to the service's courses for manpower, personnel, air traffic control, communications, electronics repair and weather. At peak times, upwards of 4,700 students can be enrolled there.

Delays in graduating new students could mean introductory positions in squadrons will go vacant and more experienced airmen won't be able to attend advanced skills courses.

Before Katrina struck on Aug. 29, about 2,400 students were enrolled there, including 1,100 airmen attending their first school since leaving basic training and 1,300 airmen at Keesler for advanced courses.

Within days of Katrina's strike, all but a few of the advanced students had headed back to their home bases and their old jobs.

Most of the 1,100 new airmen were flown to Sheppard, where they were put up in vacant dormitories.

At Sheppard, staff members are reviewing the students' records.

Students who were within a couple of weeks of graduating from Keesler will likely get permission to continue onto their next assignment, said Brig. Gen. James A. Whitmore, commander of Sheppard's 82nd Training Wing. At their new bases, the airmen will get on-the-job training to cover what they missed at Keesler.

Keesler students who were due to go to Sheppard for their next stage of training, such as those learning electronic equipment repairs, will continue their education at Sheppard, Whitmore said.

The Air Force decided to send the students to Sheppard rather than keep them at Keesler, because Keesler's dorm rooms were needed to house the base's permanent staff of about 6,200 airmen and their families, in addition to relief teams arriving.

Estimates to the damage at Keesler place the price at \$300 million to repair the base's offices and classrooms and \$100 million to restore base housing.

Lord said about 25 percent of Keesler's buildings were left usable and another 50 percent can be repaired.

Roughly, 800 of Keesler's 1,800 residences were left uninhabitable.

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In teaching facilities, much of the damage was from flooding on ground floors. Structurally, the base's classroom and dormitory buildings fared well because they were constructed to withstand winds of 170 mph, Lord said.

Before Keesler's wind measurement station was knocked out, the base recorded sustained winds of 105 mph and gusts of up to 140 mph.

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Air Force lawyer facing murder-for-hire charges awaits ruling

By [Rod Hafemeister](#)

Times staff writer

SAN ANTONIO — Capt. Barry W. Brown, the Air Force lawyer accused of plotting with a female enlisted paralegal to murder his wife, should learn his fate today — one day after pleading guilty to all charges.

He's also likely to have to face the target of the hit, his wife, Irene Brown, who is expected to testify as part of the sentencing phase of the general court martial.

Brown avoided a full trial by entering a plea agreement, approved in early September by 2nd Air Force commander Maj. Gen. Loyd S. "Chip" Utterback.

Brown pleaded guilty to attempted premeditated murder of his wife, conspiracy to commit premeditated murder and failure to obey a lawful general regulation by wrongful fraternization with an enlisted paralegal.

He also agreed to testify against his alleged co-conspirator, Staff Sgt. Ramona A. Greiner. Greiner is scheduled to face a court martial starting Sept. 20, charged with conspiracy to commit premeditated murder, wrongful solicitation to commit murder and dereliction of duty for her relationship with Brown.

Brown and Greiner were both assigned to the 37th Training Wing Staff Judge Advocate office at Lackland Air Force Base. Both have been in pre-trial confinement since March 25, when they were taken into custody moments after meeting with the man they allegedly tried to hire to kill Irene Brown for \$25,000.

The hit man, a friend of Greiner, actually was working undercover with the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, which recorded phone conversations and made a video recording of the meeting.

Today, prosecution and defense attorneys will argue for what kind of sentence they believe military judge Col. William Burd should impose. The sentencing phase is expected to include witnesses showing the impact of the conspiracy. Defense attorneys will offer mitigating evidence in an effort to get the sentence reduced.

Brown could receive a maximum of life in prison without possibility of parole, dismissal from the Air

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Force, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, and a fine.

The judge does not see the sentencing part of the agreement until after pronouncing his sentence.

Read the full story in the Sept. 26 edition of Air Force Times, on sale Sept. 19.

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Little Rock helps out

Little Rock Air Force Base is the hub for international aid for victims of Hurricane Katrina, with the first foreign aircraft landing at the base on Sept. 5.

“Little Rock Air Force Base is proud to be participating in the relief effort for Hurricane Katrina,” Brig. Gen. Joseph M. Reheiser, 314th Airlift Wing commander, said in a press statement. “Serving as the hub for international aid, Little Rock ... stands ready and able to take on the incoming relief supplies. Our airmen have played a vital role in this process and are working hard to provide relief to our southern neighbors.”

By Sept. 7 the base had received more than 180 tons of cargo and was expected to receive an additional 250 tons in subsequent days, officials said.

From Little Rock, contracted tractor-trailer drivers are hauling cargo to the Gulf Coast.

The base trains aircrews from all branches of the military and from 28 allied nations on the C-130 Hercules. The base’s own contributions to relief efforts included, as of Sept. 7, 36 airmen assigned to Joint Task Force-Katrina and 25 C-130 relief support missions, officials said.

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September 19, 2005

Keesler airmen go home early AEF 1 and 2 send airmen to assist in hurricane recovery

By Bruce Rolfsen

Times staff writer

Hundreds of airmen assigned to Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., are being brought home early from overseas deployments. Hundreds more now deployed to assist in Hurricane Katrina relief efforts will be expected to deploy overseas next year.

About 445 Keesler airmen have come home early from overseas Air Expeditionary Force deployments. The Air Force decided there was a more pressing need for the airmen to be with their families or at Keesler than to be deployed.

“They can’t effectively perform the mission if their heads and hearts are focused on the safety and welfare of their loved ones,” said a statement from Brig. Gen. Allen G. Peck, who oversees much of the day-to-day air operations in Iraq and Afghanistan as deputy commander of the Combined Forces Air Component.

Those returning include about 125 airmen who were on their way to the Middle East and Central Asia as part of the ongoing arrival of AEFs 7 and 8, said Lt. Col. Wanda Davies, deputy chief for AEF Center’s Combat Support Division at Langley Air Force Base, Va.

About 45 Keesler airmen with AEFs 7 and 8 decided to continue with their deployments and did not return.

The service also allowed about 320 airmen who already were overseas as part of AEFs 5 and 6 to head home as quickly as air transportation could be arranged, Davies said.

Most of the AEF 5 and 6 airmen already were scheduled to be home by late September, the end of their four-month rotations.

A group of 51 returning airmen touched down Sept. 8 in Houston. From there, the airmen headed out on commercial flights to catch up with their families, many of whom had left the Keesler area before Katrina reached the coast Aug. 29.

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Of the 51 returning airmen, 13 were considered mission essential and left Houston for Keesler, where they will join the base recovery efforts.

Katrina now, AEF in spring

As the Air Force brings Keesler airmen home, the AEF Center is calling on airmen from other bases to deploy eight months early with their AEF teams to support Katrina operations.

Airmen tasked for Katrina missions through the AEF Center are coming from the pool of airmen assigned to AEFs 1 and 2, who weren't due to deploy until about May 2006, Davies said.

The Air Force didn't task airmen from AEFs 7 and 8 for Katrina missions because airmen with the skills needed for hurricane relief are already on their way to overseas missions.

And the service didn't call up airmen from AEFs 9 and 10 because it didn't want to affect their preparation for the deployments starting in late December, Davies said.

As of Sept. 8, about 2,500 airmen had been assigned to Katrina missions through the AEF Center. Overall, more than 8,000 airmen are taking part in Katrina operations, including about 2,300 from active-duty units, 300 from the Reserve and 5,300 from the Air National Guard, according to Air Force numbers.

Because the deployments have been happening so rapidly, a breakdown of the airmen's job specialties or units wasn't available from Air Force headquarters.

For airmen assigned to Katrina duties by the AEF Center, there won't be any waivers for AEF deployments in 2006, Davies said. Those airmen still are expected to be ready to deploy next spring with AEFs 1 and 2.

That the Air Force had to reach ahead four AEFs to fill Katrina assignments, shows that Katrina relief operations have affected the same specialties that are in high demand for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Among those being deployed to Katrina missions are airmen skilled at setting up and running airfields; communications specialists to link offices and bases; civil engineers to assist in building the bases and

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helping with local recovery efforts; aerial port crews to handle cargo and passengers; medical teams; airlift crews; and search-and-rescue units.

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Luke AFB, Ariz.



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Wittman residents feel slighted

By Rusty Bradshaw, Independent Newspapers

Wittman residents plan to continue their legal actions to force changes in a law enacted by the Arizona Legislature in 2004.

Residents of the small community northwest of Surprise, but inside the city's planning area, claim the law - introduced as HB 2141 - deprives them of their property rights and, in some cases, forces them to leave their homes with little or no compensation.



Their first lawsuit, claiming the legislature violated the state constitution by approving the bill, was dismissed, but an appeal to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals will be filed, according to Wittman resident Gary Byler.

"We believe we will get a better result there," he said. "But we'll have to file more lawsuits because I don't believe the legislature will do anything about this."

Community residents have already spent more than \$10,000 in legal fees.

The state law established noise and accident potential zones around Luke Air Force Base's Auxiliary Field 1, generally located at Jomax Road and 219th Avenue. Development within those zones are restricted to uses "compatible" with military airports. The Surprise City Council approved a general plan amendment Nov. 23, 2004 designating land for employment and airport preservation to satisfy requirements of the law. The amendment did not affect development that had an approved plan through Surprise or Maricopa County prior to the new law.

State Sen. Jack Harper (R-Surprise) met with nearly 400 Wittman residents Sept. 7 to discuss the matter. He had little to offer in the way of answers and few were pleased with his response. One man angrily called him a liar and many others expressed their displeasure each time he said he did not know the answer to questions.

"I know you are all frustrated, and I understand that," said resident Dave Hodges, who moderated the meeting. "But we want to keep this discussion civil."

The federal government had set aside \$14.3 million over 20 years as compensation for land owners who had their property rights taken. Sen. Harper said it was his intention the state would match that figure.

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"The Senate proposed \$10 million and the House only wanted to give \$1 million. The compromise was to provide \$5 million," he said. "Hopefully, we will see what we can do this year for more compensation."

A number of residents wanted Sen. Harper to commit to representing their interests at the legislative level. He said he would talk with the governor's military commission, which is going through HB 2141 to find and rectify problems with the law.

"I agree the \$5 million is inadequate," he said. "But I can't promise anything until I look into it."

Auxiliary Field 1 is Luke Air Force Base's main practice field. While fighter jets do not land there, they practice various instrument approaches and can make several passes very close to the ground.

During the City Council meeting Nov. 23, Wittman residents protested the city should wait to see if Luke AFB would be closed. The law legislators passed did not require compliance until December 2005.

However, in mid-July Surprise officials learned from their lobbyist group in Washington, D.C., the Base Realignment and Closure Committee did not target Luke AFB to close.

Mr. Hodges claimed Wittman residents do not want to see Luke AFB closed.

"Wittman residents enjoyed a good relationship with Luke AFB. There was no issue until General Rand and his staff arrived, and then we feel we got left out," he said. "We would be pleased to have Luke AFB stay open, but we object to the base's interference in our lives."

Mr. Hodges claims residents feel slighted over the compensation issue because West Valley farmers got a beefier compensation package for areas around Luke AFB itself.

"Noise levels are not the issue, fair compensation is," one woman told the senator.

An example of constitutional violations was a provision that no property would be taken or used without compensation being provided to the owner prior to the taking. Mr. Hodges asked Sen. Harper why that was ignored by the Legislature. The senator answered claiming the real debate was what is the fair market value of land in the area.

"Homes in my community are valued at \$250,000-\$300,000," one man said. "How does \$5 million compare with that value?"

Another man asked the senator if he owned a home and got an affirmative answer.

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"I'll offer you double the compensation you are offering me and I want to move into your house," he shot back.

Sen. Harper admitted Legislators need to do a better job of letting their constituents know what is going on during legislative sessions. He said HB 2141 started as a road bill and was completely changed through a "strike everything" amendment.

"No one meant to do anything sneaky," Sen. Harper said.

What do you think?

Should the Arizona Legislature repeal the 2004 HB2141, which established limits on property rights for some land owners? You can post comments at newsblog.info/0303, e-mail rbradshaw@newszap.com, write 10220 W. Bell Road, Suite 116, Sun City, AZ 85351 or call our anonymous Speak Out line at (623) 445-2891.

Post your comments on this issue at newsblog.info/0303. Surprise News Editor Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at (623) 972-6101 or rbradshaw@newszap.com.

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